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GENERAL AND COMPLETE DISARMAMENT

Letter dated 15 July 1996 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On the instructions of my Government, I have the honour to transmit herewith the address given by His Excellency Mr. Leonid Kuchma, the President of Ukraine, on the occasion of the signing of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, which took place on 11 April 1996 in Cairo (see annex).

I would be grateful if you could have the present letter and its annex circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under item 71 of the preliminary list.

(Signed) Anatoli M. ZLENKO
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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ANNEX

Address given on 11 April 1996 in Cairo by the President of Ukraine on the occasion of the signing of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty

It is generally recognized that solving the problem of the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons is one of the most urgent issues of the present day. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), to which Ukraine acceded as a full member in 1994, is an important instrument of the non-proliferation regime.

The first 25-year period of the authority of the NPT has demonstrated vividly that the ideas the Treaty is based upon have found wide support from the majority of countries of the world. Though the NPT is not an ideal document in the strict sense of the word, it nevertheless plays the role of an important starting-point for the nuclear disarmament process. For this reason, in assessing the international non-proliferation regime as a system that has justified itself in principle, it is necessary to continue efforts for the improvement and development of specific mechanisms for the practical implementation of the norms included in it.

One such mechanism strengthening the non-proliferation regime and of utmost importance for the realization of article VII of the Treaty consists of regional measures and, in particular, the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in Latin America (Treaty of Tlatelolco, 1967), in the South Pacific region (Treaty of Rarotonga, 1985) and in South-East Asia (Treaty signed in December 1995).

Conclusion of one more international legally binding document on the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone on the African continent is certainly a new and tangible contribution to the process of strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime and of supporting strategic stability in the world.

Highly appreciating the peaceful efforts of the African countries, on behalf of Ukraine, a State that has voluntarily rejected a military nuclear potential that is third in size in the world, I sincerely welcome the leaders of all the States that are today signing this important document. Along with the other treaties on nuclear-weapon-free zones, it will further reduce nuclear programmes by banning deployment, testing and use of nuclear weapons on a considerable part of the territory of our planet.

Signing the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty should prompt other States, and first of all the nuclear States, to more intensive cooperation on the development and conclusion of new agreements concerning this problem and, in particular, of a comprehensive test-ban treaty and of a convention on the prohibition of production of fissile material for military purposes.

We are convinced that universal international cooperation aimed at protecting our fragile world from the threat of a nuclear catastrophe will necessarily bring the desired results.